



Rory Michael O'Neil

November 12, 1956 - April 2, 2024

Dr. Rory Michael O'Neil passed away on April 2, 2024 in Austin, Texas and has gone "Onward through the fog!" one last time at the age of 67. Rory was born November 12, 1956 in West Point, New York as the seventh of eight O'Neil children. As part of such a large military family, he spent his childhood globetrotting with many rambunctious stories from the countries he lived in and visited along the way. He always held a certain soft spot for Taiwan, speaking fondly of his time on Grass Mountain and passionately advocating for Taiwanese rights throughout his life.

Rory graduated high school in Stuttgart, Germany, at 16, made his way to Florida, missed the bus after "a little too much party" on the beach and hitchhiked to Texas where he ultimately started his career in science and spent most of his adult life. He graduated from The University of Texas at Austin in 1978 with a degree in Biological Sciences. He then earned his Masters and Doctorate degrees in Botany, specializing in Phycology. He later went on to teach and conduct research at the University of Houston, UTEX Culture Collection of Algae, and UMGC Misawa along with many visiting scientist engagements. Rory returned to San Antonio to care for his aging parents, taking them to weekly mass at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament.

Rory enjoyed skiing, music, the environment, a good coupon, a cold Dr. Pepper, and the pursuit of lifelong education. He enjoyed sharing many of his

passions with his two daughters and was the master of odd gifts - when a football was met with confusing looks by his girls, a bread maker took its place. He often planned elaborate road-trips and many summers were spent on month-long excursions to over 20 states and two Canadian provinces (in a Geo Metro of all cars). Science was also a common ground in his family, and Rory spent many days with his children at the Houston Zoo (where he volunteered as a docent), the Houston Museum of Natural Science as well as dozens of state and national parks. One of Rory's fondest memories and claim to fame was starring in a Lone Star Beer commercial.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Col. Donald and Mary Ann O'Neil and brother Terrence "Terry" O'Neil. He is survived by his children, Bonnie and Molly (Zach) as well as his six siblings and countless nieces and nephews. The last sparkles in his eyes belonged to his cat, Fishsticks, and his granddaughters, Ellie and Nora.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date this May.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in his name to Girlstart, a local non-profit dedicated to empowering girls in science, technology, engineering, and math. <https://give.girlstart.org/>

Tribute Wall

TM

“Rory and I were Army brats together at Stuttgart American High School when we were just 15 years old. He loved that he was older than me by 6 weeks, making me the youngest in the class. He was my best friend and also the best friend of my boyfriend, Scott, and we had so much fun together. I still see his flame of long red hair and hear his easy, quiet rat-tat-tat laugh. He called me Ter, I called him Roar. He was a slender young man with a deep, deep voice. I told him once it reminded me of the Peanut M&M commercials, and after that, our favorite greeting was me calling, "Plaaaa-iiin..." in a high-pitched voice and Rory answering deeply "...and Peanut". Silly fun stuff.

Our school employed a liberal method of teaching in which attendance was loosely enforced, so this resulted in much skipping of class and long lunches out on the golf course/ wild area behind the school. One day I brought a box of our favorite peanut butter "Gaucho" brand sandwich cookies to share. Rory immediately bet me \$100 that he could fit the entire box of cookies into his mouth, braces and all. Of course, I took him up on that, even though I did not have \$100, and we all had fun watching as one by one the cookies went into his mouth. It was hilarious. Since I did not have the money to pay him back, I came up with a plan to pay him \$2.50 a year for 40 years. "That way we will never lose touch!" I said. "Never fear, Ter!" He said, "We will NEVER lose touch." And we never did.

I miss you, Rory. I miss knowing my oldest friend is not there to call. Thanks for enriching my life for 50 years.

Love always,

Ter

aka Terry Lewis Moore



Terry Lewis Moore - May 17, 2024 at 08:54 AM



“ Please join us for a celebration of life for our father, Rory O'Neil, on Saturday, June 1st. Molly and I ventured out to Eloise Woods Natural Burial Park last weekend and enjoyed the spring wildflowers and butterflies with his granddaughters. We think dad would've liked it, too. I'll post the interment hour and Austin party details once we have them; just wanted to give the date. ❤️

Bonnie Rose - May 08, 2024 at 10:42 PM



“ I am so sorry.

Cindi - May 04, 2024 at 04:35 PM



“ We miss you Papa.



Molly - April 21, 2024 at 08:47 PM



“ Anh Ngo lit a candle in memory of Rory Michael O'Neil



Anh Ngo - April 16, 2024 at 12:50 AM

AN

Thank you, Child of Grass Mountain, for sharing your sweet memories in Taiwan with me. May you rest in peace.

Anh Ngo - April 16, 2024 at 12:53 AM

ZP

“ *We last met Rory in Dec, 2017, when we in Texas for Christmas (we live in Japan). We knew Rory when he lived in Japan, teaching for UMUC (now it's Univ of Maryland Global Campus). He always had entertaining stories whenever we faculty got together for a relaxed lunch. My daughters remember the many plants around the house.*



Zen-Danei Parker - April 14, 2024 at 08:53 AM



My dad still had your holiday letter (I think, didn't want to intrude) and contact in his briefcase and immediate possessions. He could be bad about reaching out, but I know that meant he cherished your friendship.
-Bonnie

Bonnie Rose - April 15, 2024 at 11:21 PM

YU

“ *No words. Can't believe it.*

Yuliya - April 14, 2024 at 08:22 AM

TR

“ You shared your love of Taiwan with all of us and you were the best contributor to our site. God bless you, Rory. R.I.P. ~Trish




Trish - April 13, 2024 at 07:36 PM

AG

“ Anna Rae Gilder lit a candle in memory of Rory Michael O'Neil



Anna Rae Gilder - April 13, 2024 at 09:40 AM


Barbara
Dodge

“ How sad. I have been a Facebook friend of Rory for many years and always found his posts interesting. But our friendship started long before Facebook. It started on Grass Mountain in Taiwan and at the Dominican School. As two young American children in a faraway land, we shared many exciting adventures. Among them was watching the rats scurry across the movie screen at the theater, which added to the movie line of South Pacific. Watching the locals tie cockroaches to small carts and race them down the dirt road. Attending activities at the Catholic school, carefully balancing our books and ink bottles as we transferred to the new school. He was one of the few who did not laugh when my ink bottle fell and stained the brand-new marble floor. It was good to have a friend like him. I am so sorry for your loss and the loss of all his friends either in the present or from his past. Barb (McFadden) Dodge

Barbara Dodge - April 12, 2024 at 04:38 PM